



U.S. CAPITOL

Visitor Center

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September 15, 2011

New Exhibition of Civil War Treasures Offered at U.S. Capitol Visitor Center

Capitol Visitor Center Exhibition Spotlights Civil War History at the Capitol

WASHINGTON, DC – Beth Plemmons, CEO for Visitor Services at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, announced today that a new exhibition of Civil War-related documents and artifacts will be on display beginning September 19 in the Visitor Center’s Exhibition Hall. The new items will be on display through March 2012.

“We are honored to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War by exhibiting a group of historically significant documents and artifacts that relate to the role of Congress and the Capitol during this critical period in our nation’s history,” said Plemmons.

Visitors of any age will appreciate the historic significance of these documents and artifacts. Mathew Brady’s photographs, the first images to document an American war, will be on display. On loan from the Library of Congress, Brady’s photographs were, for most people, the first time they witnessed the carnage of war. The New York Times wrote that Brady had brought “home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war.” Congress acquired the collection to preserve the visual history for future generations.

Also on loan from the Library of Congress, are pages that detail the personal stories of former slaves. These autobiographical accounts were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration. They were assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume, *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*.

Visitors will learn about critical moments in the Civil War such as the battle between the Monitor and the Merrimac as depicted in a hand-colored lithograph on loan from the Library of Congress. In 1861, Congress encouraged development of the ironclad warship. Some people say that the Battle of Hampton Roads, often referred to as the Battle of the *Monitor* and *Merrimack*, was the most important naval battle of the Civil War -- it was the first meeting in combat of ironclad warships. It was a critical component of the effort of the Confederacy to break the Union blockade, which had cut off Virginia’s largest cities, Norfolk and Richmond, from international trade.

Guests can prepare for their trip to the Capitol by visiting the Capitol Visitor Center’s website, www.visitthecapitol.gov, where they can make an advance reservation to tour the U.S. Capitol. The website includes important logistical information that visitors need before they visit the U.S. Capitol. Also included on the website is an online exhibition where visitors may preview items from the Visitor Center’s permanent exhibition.

New public programs also have been added to the Capitol visitor's experience. A family program is offered Tuesdays through Fridays at 11:30 a.m. and provides families with an opportunity to explore Exhibition Hall in greater depth, to see how the U.S. Capitol expanded over time, and to learn about how Congress makes legislative decisions.

Two special tours that do not require reservations are offered Mondays through Fridays. A tour focused on the Capitol and Congress during the Civil War is offered at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3:30 p.m., and a tour of the Brumidi Corridors in the Senate wing of the Capitol is offered at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Through September, an outdoor tour of the Capitol Building and Grounds is offered Mondays through Fridays at 11 a.m.

For more information about the Capitol Visitor Center, go to www.visitthecapitol.gov. For the latest developments, follow the Capitol Visitor Center on Twitter @visitthecapitol.

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